

Revelation 11:15-19 “The Seventh Trumpet: The Kingdom of the World Becomes the Kingdom of Our Lord”
September 22, 2019

Joshua 6

Psalm 2

We sing about this in Psalm 2!

Sing Psalm 2

Read Revelation 11

Back in chapter 6, verse 10, the souls under the altar cried out –

“O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood
on those who dwell on earth?”

When will God make things right?

Now, here at the end of chapter 11, God himself is going to arise!

Back in Joshua 6, Israel marched around Jericho with seven trumpets before the ark.

And when the seven trumpets sounded – the people gave a great shout –
and the walls of Jericho came crashing down.

The final Judgment came upon Jericho that day!

Indeed, the utter destruction of Jericho on that day
was a picture of God’s final judgment.

But just as there were seven trumpets at Jericho –

so also there are seven trumpets
that signal the coming of the final judgment for all the earth!

Introduction: The Seven Trumpets with the Three Woes (8:6-11:19)

Today we are looking at the Seventh Trumpet.

Many have noticed that when the Seventh Trumpet is blown,
not much happens!

But think back to the Seventh Seal.

After the Seventh Seal, there was silence in heaven for half an hour.

And then the prayers of the saints arose to God.

In other words, the Seventh Seal ends with worship.

And so not surprisingly – the Seventh Trumpet also ends with worship.

What do trumpets do?

They warn.

These are the seven warnings of God to the nations.

The First Trumpet saw a third of the earth (trees and grass) burned up

The Second Trumpet saw a third of the sea creatures destroyed, and a third of the ships

Third Trumpet saw a third of the rivers and springs poisoned

The Fourth Trumpet saw a third of day and a third of night are darkened

And then the last three trumpets are also described as the Three Woes

In the Fifth Trumpet, a star falls from heaven to earth and opens the bottomless pit,
with the result that locusts like scorpions torment the wicked

(those who do not have the mark of God).

In the Sixth Trumpet, John hears the number of hundreds of millions of horsemen
breathing fire and sulfur – destroying a third of humanity.

And then came an interlude in chapters 10-11 –

The Seven Thunders were sealed up –

God will not tell everything about the future –

all you need to know is that when the 7th trumpet is blown,

“the mystery of God would be fulfilled,

just as he announced to his servants the prophets”–10:7.

Indeed, if you think about the parallel to Joshua chapter 6 –

then it is fitting that when the Seventh Trumpet blows,

the next sound you hear is “loud voices in heaven.”

The shout of the people of God declaring that the Kingdom has come!

1. “The Nations Raged” – the Kingdom of the World Is *Not Yet* the Kingdom of Christ (v15)

¹⁵ Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.”

The first thing to note is that from where *we sit*,

the kingdom of the world is *not yet* the kingdom of Christ.

It is only when the seventh angel blows his trumpet –

only *then* will the kingdom of the world become the kingdom of Christ.

Back in chapter 10, verses 5-7 we heard the oath of Jesus –

the oath of the mighty angel who comes down from heaven wrapped in a cloud

(like the Son of Man in Daniel 7) –

with a rainbow over his head (the rainbow from God's throne – ch 4) –
whose face is like the sun (like Jesus in Rev. 1),
and his legs like pillars of fire
(like Israel's God leading them through the wilderness!).

And Jesus swore an oath in chapter 10, verses 5-7,
saying that in the days of the trumpet call of the seventh angel,
the mystery of God would be fulfilled,
just as he announced to his servants the prophets.

In other words, Jesus said that when the seventh trumpet sounds,
all that God has promised will be complete!

The point is that *right now* – things are pretty messed up.
Things are *not* the way they should be.
People are not the way they should be.
We are not the way we should be!

Remember that while the book Revelation shows us a vision
of the things that are yet to take place –
(which for John meant – the way things will be from now until Jesus' returns –
and for us it means – the way things have been since the days of the apostles
and will continue to be this way until Jesus returns) –
so, while we're seeing a picture of what *will be* –
this picture is given in order to comfort us – and challenge us – *now!*

I say comfort and challenge because both are really important!
When we look around us and we see how messed up we are –
and how messed up the church is! –
we are reminded that five out of the seven churches in Rev. 2-3
were really messed up!
And Jesus says he is ready to come and destroy a couple of them!

How is that comforting?!
Because Jesus is King!
Do you realize how exciting that is!
Before Jesus sat down at the right hand of the Father –
do you remember how things were going?
The *best period* in humanity's history were the few decades
when David and Solomon were kings.

Right – there was David, who committed adultery –
had the woman’s husband killed –
and who got chased out of his kingdom by his rebellious son.

My hero!

Well – and then there was Solomon –
who had a thousand wives and concubines –
wound up being led astray to worship other gods –
and left an incompetent son on his throne.

And that was the Golden Age of the Kingdom of God!!

Can someone please explain to me how this Hebrew religion
managed to take over the civilized world?!!!

God uses the weak and foolish things of this world to shame the wise and powerful!
He didn’t pick Egypt – with its ancient and powerful civilization.
He didn’t pick China – with its splendor and wisdom.

He chose a tiny little people in the hills between the Mediterranean and the Dead Seas.
And it was there that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

It was there that God became man –
that the eternal Son of God joined himself to our humanity –
in order that he might join us to himself!

How can the kingdoms of the world become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ?
Because the Lion of the tribe of Judah – the root of Jesse – the Son of David –
has also become the lamb who was slain.

In our Lord Jesus – God himself became a man –
and he died for our sins.
We deserved death – the wages of sin is death.
We deserved judgment – because we were rebels!
We haven’t loved God.
We haven’t loved others!

But while we were sinners – Christ died for us!
But he didn’t just die!
He was raised from the dead – he triumphed over death!

He defeated the power of the grave.

We saw in chapter 5 that when Jesus ascended to the right hand of the Father,
the 24 elders – the worship leaders of the heavenly assembly –
sang a new song:

“Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals
[in other words – you are worthy to declare the unfolding purposes of God!]
for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God
from every tribe and language and people and nation,
and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God,
and they shall reign on the earth.” (5:9-10).

Notice that in chapter 5 we are told that Jesus has ransomed us –
he has *purchased us* –
a people from every tribe and language and people and nation –
in other words – the church of Jesus Christ is – in one sense –
a kingdom –
they are the place where the kingdom of God is seen in miniature.

In the 7th Trumpet, the kingdom of the world *becomes* the kingdom of God.
But in between the ascension of Christ and the Seventh Trumpet –
in this time – where we live –
we are a colony of the Kingdom of Heaven –
living in the midst of the kingdom of this world.

We are not the *ghetto* of the Kingdom of Heaven.
We are not hiding in a corner – waiting for God to “do something.”

No, indeed!

God has already done it!

In the Ascension of Jesus Christ, we have become a kingdom and priests to our God.

We have become the place where the kingdom of God is beginning to take shape.

Of course – we need to be careful here –
because the Kingdom is bigger than the church.
Jesus reigns over all things!
Jesus is Lord!
He is the head over all things for the sake of the church
(to use Paul’s phrase from Eph. 1:22) –
and his purpose is to bring *all things* under his feet.

We do not yet see all things under his feet (Heb 2),
but we see *Jesus* – crowned with glory and honor –
because of the suffering of death,
so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

So yes, the message of the Seventh Trumpet is comforting!
There is *comfort* in knowing that Jesus *will* make all things right!
But the message of the Seventh Trumpet is also *challenging*.
It challenges us to the core of our being!!

When the Seventh Trumpet blows –
The kingdom of this world becomes the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ.
If your heart is set on another kingdom –
if your life is devoted to something *other* than Jesus' kingdom?
Then judgment is coming against you!

Let me just say to you right now –
if your heart is devoted to establishing *your own kingdom* –
then you need to repent today!
You need to turn away from your sin.

I don't care how long you've "been a Christian"!
Jesus warns *the churches* in chapters 2-3 that they need to repent –
or he will come and destroy them!

If there is something else that matters more to you than the kingdom of Jesus –
then you need to repent – or else you will perish at the judgment day!

After all – *listen* to what it means for the kingdom of the world to become the kingdom of Jesus!

2. "And He Shall Reign Forever and Ever" – Rewarding His Servants and Destroying the Destroyers (v16-18)

¹⁶ *And the twenty-four elders who sit on their thrones before God fell on their faces and worshiped God,*

I have to stop to point out what's going on here!
The 24 elders are leading worship again!
We keep seeing over and over again in the book of Revelation
that the *elders* are the worship leaders.
They are the ones who lead the people of God in the heavenly assembly.

But also notice what they do when they hear the gospel!
When they hear the proclamation of the Good news!

They fall on their faces – and they worship God!

And because they are leading *you* in worship –
they are *showing you* what you ought to do as well!

Fall on your faces and worship God!

And listen to what they say:

¹⁷ *saying,*
“We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty,
who is and who was,
for you have taken your great power
and begun to reign.

Notice that they only say “who is and who was” –
they leave out “and who is to come”! –
or better yet, they replace it with –
“for you have taken your great power and begun to reign.”

When we say that God is the one who is and who was and who is to come,
what we are saying is that the same God who created all things –
and who governs all of history –
is the same God who will make all things right in the end!

He will establish *his kingdom*.

The kingdom of this world will become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ!
All the forces that oppose Jesus are going to lose!

And that’s what we hear in verse 18:

¹⁸ *The nations raged,*

This is an echo of Psalm 2 – “why do the nations rage against the LORD,
and against his Christ? – against his Messiah – his anointed one?”

The nations raged...

*but your wrath came,
and the time for the dead to be judged,*

And when the dead are judged there are two options:

*and for rewarding your servants, the prophets and saints,
and those who fear your name,
both small and great,
and for destroying the destroyers of the earth.”*

At the end of history – God will judge the living and the dead.

He will destroy the destroyers of the earth.

This language is borrowed from Jeremiah 51:25 (28:25 in the LXX) –
when Jeremiah says that God will destroy Babylon.

The idea in Jeremiah was that God will overthrow those nations who oppress his people.
God will bring justice – he will make things right.

Those who destroy the helpless will themselves be destroyed!

And when God makes all things right,
he will also reward his servants – he will reward all who fear his name,
both the small and the great.
God will vindicate those who have suffered for his sake.

Remember that!

And it doesn't matter who you are!

Whether you are great or small – old or young – male or female –
all those who fear God's name will be vindicated at the final day!

You might wonder – what does it mean for God to *reward* me?

Our Confession has a really helpful way of saying this.

16.5. “We cannot by our best works merit pardon of sin, or eternal life at the hand of God,
by reason of the great disproportion that is between them and the glory to come;
and the infinite distance that is between us and God,
whom, by them, we can neither profit, nor satisfy for the debt of our former sins,
but when we have done all we can,
we have done but our duty, and are unprofitable servants:”
Also, even our best works “as they are good, they proceed from his Spirit;

and as they are wrought by us, they are defiled,
and mixed with so much weakness and imperfection,
that they cannot endure the severity of God's judgment.”

Seriously, if we are honest with ourselves – we must acknowledge
that we can't possibly make up for our sins by “doing our best.”

So how can God *possibly* reward us?!!

Our Confession keeps going:

16.6. “Notwithstanding, the persons of believers being accepted through Christ,
their good works also are accepted in him;
not as though they were in this life wholly unblamable
and unrepovable in God's sight;
but that he [God], looking upon them in his Son,
is pleased to accept and reward that which is sincere,
although accompanied with many weaknesses and imperfections.”

When God accepts you in Christ –

he also accepts your good works!

He doesn't look at your sin any more!

Why not?

Because Jesus died for your sins!

And so when God looks at you – he looks at you in Jesus –

he looks at you through the righteousness of his Son!

He doesn't hold anything against you!

That's why he sent Jesus!

He sent Jesus to pay the price for your sins!

And so he rewards that which is sincere –

not because it's perfect –

but because you belong to Jesus!

And then notice what happens in heaven:

3. Fire from Heaven – How God Responds to the Prayers and Praises of His People (v19)

¹⁹ Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant was seen within his temple. There were flashes of lightning, rumblings,^[e] peals of thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail.

There is a pattern here.

At the end of each of the Sevens (we saw it in the Seven Seals –
and now we see it in the Seven Trumpets),
we hear the prayers and praises of God's people.

After the Seven Seals we saw the prayers of the saints ascend to heaven.
Now after the Seven Trumpets we hear the 24 elders give praise to God.

This is the basic pattern that you see all through biblical worship –
after the Word of God is proclaimed, we respond with our prayers and praises.

And then when God's people pray – when God's people *praise* –
how does God respond?

¹⁹ Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant was seen within his temple. There were flashes of lightning, rumblings,^[c] peals of thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail.

God responds by sending fire from heaven!

Just like when Moses dedicated the tabernacle –
just like when Solomon dedicated the temple
just like when Elijah prayed at Mt. Carmel –
and just like the apostles prayed on the Day of Pentecost!

That's what God does when *we pray*.
He sends fire from heaven – lightning and thunder – earthquakes – hail.

Throughout the OT, when these things appear, God himself appears.

In other words, the picture here is that God himself is coming!
He is coming in judgment – yes –
but as the ark of the covenant reminds us –
he is coming also in gracious presence to be with his people!

When will God hear the prayers of his people –
when will he come to vindicate his people – and take vengeance on his foes?